

Lesson 7: Reform



Introduction

God told the Prophet Jeremiah to go to the local potter's house, where he would give Jeremiah a visual lesson. Like a potter who molds and remolds the clay according to his purpose, God himself is the one who makes us into the people that he would have us be.

Read: Jeremiah 18:1-11, 18-20

On reading these verses, what are some of your initial impressions and questions? What stands out to you?

Old Testament

New Testament

Where in the Bible?

Jeremiah is one of the Major Prophets in the Old Testament.

The Old Testament: Prophets

In the Book of Jeremiah, we hear not only the message that God gave to the prophet to speak, we also hear about events from the prophet's life and his own experience of suffering and loss. The book leads up to the conquering of Judah by the King of Babylon.

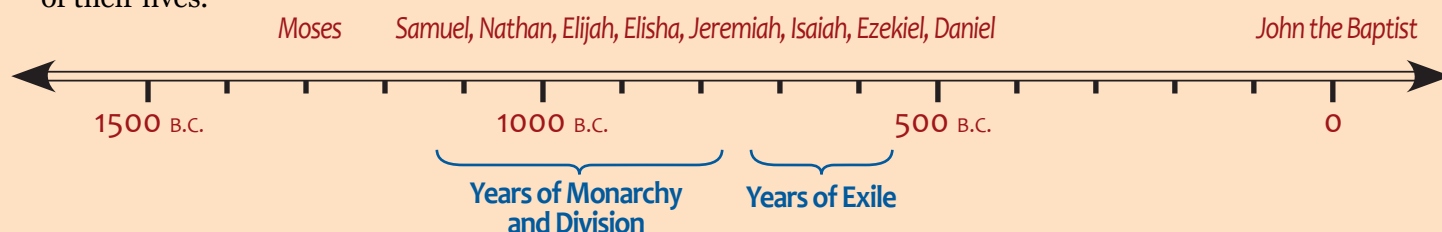
Biblical Genre: Prophecy

When we hear the word "prophecy," what often comes to mind is prediction of the future. But the prophets were not simply fortune tellers, nor were they people who simply made guesses about things to come.

Prophets were messengers who spoke the direct message of God. Sometimes this message had to do with future events — like the bad results of the people's bad actions. But prophecy is also a call to action. Too often people take their faith in God for granted. The prophets help us realize that the Lord is real and that God is acting in our lives every day!

When in Time?

God sent prophets whenever he chose to send a message to his people, so he sent many prophets over the years. While there is no single time period that includes all the prophets, many of them lived in the eras of Monarchy and Division (around 1100-700 B.C.) and through years of Assyrian and Babylonian exile (around 700-500 B.C.). The names of some famous prophets are listed below, near the approximate times of their lives:



Discuss: Jeremiah 18:1-11, 18-20

1. In our story today, where did God send Jeremiah? Why did God send the prophet there *before* he gave Jeremiah his message?
2. According to verse 4, what did Jeremiah see happen to the potter's work? What did the potter do about it? Did the ruined clay vessel prevent the potter from getting his work done?
3. God said: "Like the clay is in the potter's hand, so you are in my hand" (v. 6). How might that be both a frightening and a comforting thought? Who is the one in charge — the potter or the clay?
4. If God is Creator of this universe, why is there so much evil in the world? What has gone wrong? What does God say he is able to do when things go badly?
5. In verse 11, what did God say he was going to do to his people in Judah because of their sin? Did God's punishment mean he did not love his people? What did God want them to do?
6. When in your life have you seen God take something bad and turn it into something good? Have you ever looked back on hard times and seen how they helped you to grow or become a better person?
7. Read Romans 9:14-24. From what you read here, does it seem like God sits back and lets human beings do what we want? Or is God actually involved in the world and in our lives? How so?
8. On the most basic level, faith equals trust. Knowing God is our Maker, what reason(s) do we have for trusting him?

Where in the World?

The map at the far right of the page shows a close-up view of the divided kingdoms: **Israel** in the north (whose capital was Samaria), and **Judah** in the south (whose capital was Jerusalem).

► *Jeremiah spoke to people of both the north and south, but he spent much of his time in the city of Jerusalem.*

See how well you can remember and identify the Old Testament names of the major bodies of water located in these biblical lands. *On the blank lines printed on the map, label the following:*

1. The Great Sea
2. The Salt Sea
3. Chinnereth Sea
4. The Jordan River

